

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Triennial Needs Assessment

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Prepared by:
Keith LoMurray
Research Analyst
DHS Decision Support Services

Executive Summary

The North Dakota State Rehabilitation Council along with Division of Vocational Rehabilitation of the North Dakota Department of Human Services conducted an assessment of the vocational rehabilitation needs of persons with disabilities residing in the state of North Dakota. The purpose of the assessment was to provide planners with information pertinent to the allocation of resources, to provide a rationale for the development of the NDVR's State Plan, and to comply with the needs assessment mandate in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Five research questions guided the study:

1. What are the population estimates and characteristics of people with disabilities in North Dakota?
2. What do clients/potential clients of VR perceive as their unmet needs and barriers to successful outcomes?
3. What do advocates for people with disabilities perceive as unmet needs and barriers to successful outcomes?
4. What do providers of rehabilitation services perceive as unmet needs and barriers to successful outcomes?
5. How do providers perceptions of needs and barriers differ from clients and advocates perceptions of needs and barriers?

The process that was developed for conducting the needs assessment involved two primary data-gathering approaches:

1. Obtain background information about individuals with disabilities from secondary data sources (e.g. American Community Survey, Centers for Disease Control, etc.)
2. Obtain information through paper-based and electronic surveys from the main stakeholder groups (people with disabilities, representative of employment services providers for people with disabilities, and advocates of people with disabilities.)

Population Estimates

Analysis of U.S. Census data shows that North Dakota has a similar prevalence (11.6%) to the U.S. as a whole (12.0%) of non-institutionalized people who state they have a disability according to the 2009 American Community Survey (ACS). According to ACS data, the employment rate of individuals with

disabilities in ND (56.1%) is significantly higher than in the U.S. (36.0%). This may be due to the fact that ND's economy has been performing better than the U.S. as a whole. The employment rate of individuals without a disability in North Dakota is 86.8%.

According to the ACS data, in North Dakota a higher percentage of individuals with a disability (19.6%) live below the poverty rate than individuals without a disability (8.39%). In the U.S. 26.4% of individuals with a disability live below the poverty rate compared to 10.8% of individuals without a disability. In North Dakota, 13.7% of individuals with a disability are receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) compared to 18.5% of individuals with a disability in the U.S.

Surveys

Researchers solicited information from four primary stakeholder groups: (a) people being served by NDVR; (b) representatives of organizations that provide employment services to individuals with disabilities; (c) people advocating for people with disabilities; and (d) people with disabilities that could benefit from employment-related services. The approach was designed to capture input from a variety of perspectives in order to understand the multi-faceted needs of persons with disabilities in the state. Responses to the consumer survey reflect the opinions of current and former clients of NDVR. Efforts were made to gather information pertinent to unserved and underserved populations through inquiries of people with disabilities that are not receiving services through NDVR.

Consumer Surveys

The consumer survey asked for demographic information including gender, age, race, education level, county of residence, and type of disability. The survey then asked the type of organization providing their employment-related services and whether their employment needs were being met. The survey also asked about fifteen specific employment needs and whether those needs were being met. Finally the survey asked respondents to provide any suggestions they have to best meet the employment needs of individuals with disabilities through an open-ended question.

Two hundred and forty-two consumer surveys were received. Fifty-four percent of respondents were women and 40.4% were between 18 and 24 years of age. The highest percentage of respondents were from the Bismarck region and 64.4% has at least some college education. When asked which disability

types best described their disability, the highest percentage of respondents identified themselves as having a Learning Disability (39.0%) followed by Mental Illness / Emotional Disturbance (34.6%). When asked if their employment needs were being met, a higher percentage of respondents said that their needs have always or frequently been met by providers (57.0%) compared to those that said their needs were occasionally met (20.6%) and rarely or never met (22.5%).

The most commonly identified employment needs not being met were assistance with finding and/or keeping a job (19.1%), vocational guidance and career options (16.9%), and benefits planning (16.0%). Approximately 33% of respondents said all their needs were being met. An additional 29 people selected “Other” and added an open-ended response. The most common employment needs identified in the open ended responses included:

- Funding for education
- Education support (e.g. tutoring)
- Access to employers with work environments friendly to persons with disabilities

The average respondent identified 1.6 employment needs that were not being met. Of the respondents that had at least one employment need not being met, the average respondent had 4.3 employment needs that were unmet. A majority (60.9%) of consumer respondents did not identify any unmet employment needs, but the respondents that had unmet employment needs had multiple unmet needs.

After categorizing the types of disabilities into subgroups, respondents with a disability type in the subgroup “Mental Health Impairments” had the highest average number of unmet employment needs (2.5). When only respondents with at least one unmet employment need were included in the analysis “Mental Health Impairment” still had the highest number of unmet needs (4.7) and sensory impairments had the lowest number of unmet employment needs (3.6).

The following are the top three employment needs as identified by every disability subgroup:

- Benefits planning
- Vocational Guidance and Career Options
- Assistance with Finding and/or Keeping a Job

Provider and Advocate Surveys

Out of a total of 164 surveys mailed out, forty-three provider surveys were returned by December 7, 2011, yielding a response rate of 26.2%. Out of a total of 204 surveys mailed out, 104 advocate surveys were received, yielding a response rate of 50.9 %.

Fewer advocate respondents said agency/service providers were meeting the employment needs of individuals with disabilities than provider respondents. Fifty-six percent of advocates said agencies always or frequently met the needs of individuals compared to 64.9% of providers. However, more providers said that agencies rarely or never met the employment needs of individuals with disabilities than advocates.

Providers were asked from a list of employment services, which their agency currently provides and which additional services it could be providing to better meet their customers' needs. Approximately 70% of agencies provided job coaching and 64.7% offered independent living skills. Only 44.1% of agencies provided situational assessments and/or job placement and follow up. Only 5.9% said they could provide those two services in addition to those already provided to better meet their customers' needs. Providers identified supported employment (14.7%) and independent living skills (14.7%) as services they could provide to better meet their customer's needs.

Provider respondents were asked to identify the top three barriers that impeded their ability to provide services from a list of ten services. The following are the top barriers that impeded providers' ability to deliver services:

- Funding for agency operations and services
- Community perception of people with disabilities
- Funding for staff
- Geographic location of, or distance to, consumers

Both providers and advocates were asked to select the top three employment needs that are not being met. The highest percent of provider respondents (31.4%) identified benefits planning and/or youth to adult transition employment services as an employment need not being met. The third most selected employment need not being met was assistance with finding and/or keeping a job. The least selected employment need was independent living skills.

In comparison, the highest number of advocate respondents identified assistance with finding and/or keeping a job (44.6%) followed by transportation (34.8%). The third most selected employment need identified by advocates was housing. The least selected employment need identified by advocates was interpreter.

Conclusion

The needs assessment is the result of a cooperative effort between the North Dakota Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the State Rehabilitation Council. This report was prepared by the North Dakota Department of Human Services Division of Decision Support Services. These efforts solicited information about the perceptions and concerns of individuals with disabilities, advocates for individuals with disabilities and providers of employment services. This report should be used in a strategic manner that results in provision of vocational rehabilitation services designed to address needs and concerns of individuals with disabilities who seek employment.

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Introduction

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, mandates the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation of the North Dakota Department of Human Services (NDVR) along with the North Dakota State Rehabilitation Council to complete a statewide needs assessment every three years to determine the employment services needs of people with disabilities in North Dakota, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services needs of: 1) individuals with the most significant disabilities; 2) individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program; and 3) individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system.

The purpose of the statewide needs assessment project is to identify needs of persons with disabilities related to desired employment outcomes. Data collection efforts solicited input from a broad spectrum of persons with disabilities, service providers and others interested in employment-related services for people with disabilities. The data from the needs assessment effort will provide NDVR with a direction for current planning and allocation concerns, and guidance in planning for future services.

The information and data from the needs assessment project will provide a source of information for the strategic development of the state plan. The data that appear in this report are relevant to the following activities:

1. Providing data and a direction for the development of the North Dakota State Plan
2. Determining needed services and redeployment of services,
3. Assessing the vocational rehabilitation needs of unserved/underserved populations including individuals with the most significant disabilities and minorities, and
4. Identifying perceived gaps in vocational rehabilitation services.

In 2011 NDVR completed a series of assessment activities to determine the employment services needs of individuals with disabilities. These activities included: surveys to NDVR consumers, representatives of organizations that provide employment services to individuals with disabilities; people advocating for individuals with disabilities; and individuals with disabilities that could benefit from employment-related services. Activities also included environmental scan of data from sources

such as the American Community Survey, the Bureau of Labor and Statistics, and the Current Population Survey.

The process that was developed for conducting the needs assessment involved two primary data-gathering approaches:

1. Obtain background information about individuals with disabilities from secondary data sources (e.g. American Community Survey, Current Population Survey, etc.)
2. Paper-based and electronic surveys to the main stakeholder groups (people with disabilities, representative of employment services for people with disabilities, and advocates of people with disabilities.)

Population Estimates

This section examines the population estimates and demographic characteristics for individuals with disabilities in North Dakota and provides a comparison to national estimates. The research team reviewed a variety of data sources for the purposes of identifying NDVR's target population. Data relevant to the population of the state, the population of persons with disabilities in the state, and other demographic characteristics of residents of the state of North Dakota were utilized in this analysis. Sources analyzed include the following:

- The 2009 American Community Survey (ACS),
- The Current Population Survey,
- The Bureau of Labor Statistics

At the time the comprehensive statewide needs assessment report was prepared, the 2009 data were the most recent ACS data available for North Dakota. The Current Population Survey was also used as a primary source of population data.

Caution should be used when analyzing and drawing conclusions from the existing demographic data in this report. Most of the existing demographic data was not originally collected to identify the needs of North Dakotans with disabilities. The existing data usually contain estimates and have substantial margins of error and/or small sample sized. Different data sources have differing definitions for disabilities. Some areas of North Dakota's population are changing rapidly and the changes may not be represented in the U.S. Census Bureau estimates.

Individuals with Disabilities in North Dakota and the United States

According to the 2009 American Community Survey (ACS), there were 73,800 persons with a disability in North Dakota (Table 1.1). This is 11.6% percent of the state population. This is similar to the national average of 12.0% of the population having a disability.

Table 1.1: Individuals with Disabilities for North Dakota and the United States

North Dakota		United States	
Total Disabled Population	Percent of ND population	Total Disabled Population	Percent of US population
73,800	11.6%	36,230,100	12.0%

The following tables provide greater detail by age, sex, and race of those in North Dakota and the United States with a disability. Table 1.2 illustrates the number and percent of individuals with a disability in North Dakota and the United States by age and gender. In ND, the percentage of males with a disability was 12.6% and the percentage of females with a disability was 10.6%. The percentage of males and females with a disability nation-wide was 11.6% and 12.3%, respectively. Approximately nine percent of working age adults, ages 21 to 64 years, in North Dakota had a disability.

Table 1.2: Individuals with Disabilities in North Dakota and the United States by Sex and Age

	North Dakota		United States	
	Total	Percent of ND Population	Total	Percent of U.S. Population
Male	39,800	12.6%	17,200,400	11.6%
Male 4 years and younger*	200	0.7%	85,500	0.8%
Male 5 to 15 years	2,200	5.4%	1,477,700	6.4%
Male 16 to 20 years	2,000	7.0%	692,500	6.2%
Male 21 to 64 years	19,900	10.6%	9,107,500	10.4%
Male 65 to 74 years	6,300	30.2%	2,519,600	26.6%
Male 75 years and older	9,300	53.6%	3,318,200	48.5%
Female	34,000	10.6%	19,029,700	12.3%
Female 4 years and younger*	0	0.0%	72,100	0.7%
Female 5 to 15 years	200	0.6%	822,200	3.8%
Female 16 to 20 years	1,200	5.5%	523,300	4.9%
Female 21 to 64 years	14,300	7.7%	9,275,100	10.4%
Female 65 to 74 years	4,900	21.2%	2,826,500	25.5%
Female 75 years and older	13,400	49.9%	5,510,700	52.3%
*Only two sensory disability questions were asked of this population.				
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009, American Community Survey				

Table 1.3 illustrates the percent of working age people by race or ethnicity that have a disability for North Dakota and the United States. In North Dakota 17.0% of working age people that identified themselves as Native American also had a disability. North Dakota has a smaller percentage of each race that has a disability compared to the United States except the “other” category.

Table 1.3: Individuals with a Disability in North Dakota and the United States by Race and Ethnicity

	North Dakota		United States	
	Total	Percent*	Total	Percent*
White	28,800	8.5%	13,570,800	10.1%
Native American or Alaskan Native	3,300	17.0%	248,400	18.0%
Black/African American**	600	13.5%	2,976,800	14.1%
Asian**	0	0.0%	391,500	4.5%
Other	15,000	16.1%	1,195,100	10.1%
Hispanic or Latino	400	5.7%	2,162,900	8.3%
*Percent is the percent of the race with a disability				
**Estimate based on small sample size				
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009, American Community Survey				

Table 1.4 illustrates the prevalence rate of the six types of disabilities identified in the ACS. Among the six types of disabilities identified in the ACS, the highest prevalence rate in North Dakota was for ambulatory disability, at 5.8%. The smallest percentage of individuals (1.7%) had a self-care disability.

Table 1.4: Individuals with a Disability in North Dakota and the United States by Disability Type

	North Dakota		United States	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Total Population with a Disability	73,800	11.6%	157,290	12.0%
Ambulatory	34,700	5.8%	19,425,100	6.9%
Cognitive	28,400	4.8%	13,581,200	4.8%
Independent Living	22,100	4.3%	13,041,100	5.4%
Hearing	26,100	4.1%	10,221,000	3.4%
Visual	12,900	2.0%	6,453,300	2.1%
Self-Care	10,400	1.7%	7,189,100	2.6%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009, American Community Survey				

North Dakota has a civilian labor population of 372,600 people. North Dakota has an unemployment rate of 3.5%, the lowest in the United States. In 2010, 6.0% of North Dakotans between 21 and 64 years of age reported a work limitation and 9.2% reported having a disability. A work limitation is defined as

a “health problem or disability which prevents them from working or which limits the kind or amount of work they can do.”

Table 1.5 illustrates the employment rates for individuals with disabilities compared to individuals without disabilities. The employment rate for working-age people with disabilities was 56.1% compared to 85.4% for working-age people without a disability. In North Dakota individuals with an ambulatory disability had the lowest unemployment rate (41.2%).

Table 1.5: Employment Rate of Individuals with a Disability by Disability Type

	North Dakota	United States
With a Disability	56.1%	36.0%
Hearing	69.1%	52.8%
Visual	58.7%	38.7%
Cognitive	53.7%	24.9%
Self-Care	53.3%	17.3%
Independent Living	45.0%	17.2%
Ambulatory	41.2%	26.4%
Without a Disability	85.4%	76.8%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009, American Community Survey		

Table 1.6 shows the percent of people who are actively looking for work by disability type. The percentage of working-age people with disabilities who were not working but actively looking for work was 8.5% compared to 20.9% for working-age people without disabilities who were not working but looking for work. Of people with a disability among the six types identified in the ACS, the highest percentage of individuals not working but actively looking for work was for people with a hearing disability (26.9%).

Table 1.6: Individuals Actively Looking for Work by Disability Type

	North Dakota	United States
With a Disability	8.5%	11.6%
Hearing	26.9%	15.5%
Visual	19.2%	13.0%
Cognitive	15.1%	11.0%
Ambulatory	8.5%	7.7%
Independent Living	3.1%	5.6%
Self-Care	0.0%	4.6%
Without a Disability	20.9%	30.4%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009, American Community Survey		

Table 1.7 illustrates the poverty rate of working-age people with and without disabilities in ND and the United States. The poverty rate of individuals in North Dakota with a disability is 19.6% compared to 8.3% for individuals without a disability. The poverty rate of individuals in the United States with a disability is 26.4% compared to 12.4% for individuals without a disability.

Table 1.7: Poverty Rate of Individuals with and without a Disability

	North Dakota	United States
Total Population	9.4%	12.4%
With a Disability	19.6%	26.4%
Without a Disability	8.3%	10.8%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009, American Community Survey		

Table 1.8 shows the percent of individuals receiving Supplement Security Income (SSI) by disability type in North Dakota and the United States. In North Dakota 13.7% of individuals with a disability received SSI compared to 18.5% in the United States. In North Dakota the highest percentage of individuals receiving SSI had a self-care disability (22.9%).

Table 1.8 Individuals with a Disability Receiving Supplemental Security Income by Disability Type

	North Dakota		United States	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Total Population with a Disability	4,700	13.7%	3,402,800	18.5%
Self-Care	1,200	22.9%	924,100	27.9%
Cognitive	3,100	20.8%	2,002,900	27.1%
Independent Living	1,800	16.6%	1,903,800	30.1%
Ambulatory	2,200	14.1%	1,993,100	20.5%
Visual	700	11.9%	568,300	18.0%
Hearing	200	2.1%	427,800	11.2%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009, American Community Survey				

Table 1.9 illustrates the percent of individuals in North Dakota and the United States by education level and disability type. In North Dakota 16.8% of individuals with a disability had a bachelor's degree compared to 30.4% of individuals without a disability. Visual disability had the lowest percentage of people with a bachelor's degree. Approximately 54% individuals with a disability had at least some college compared to 74.2% of individuals without a disability. Of individuals with a disability, the disability type, hearing disability, had the highest percentage of individuals with at least some college

(55.5%). The disability type with the lowest percentage of individuals with at least some college was visual disability (30.9%).

Table 1.9: Individuals with Disabilities in North Dakota and the United States by Disability Type and Education Level

	North Dakota		United States	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
High School Diploma – With Disability	10,400	30.4%	6,258,600	34.0%
Self-Care	1,600	31.5%	1,115,000	33.7%
Cognitive	4,600	31.1%	2,583,200	35.0%
Visual	1,900	30.9%	1,012,800	32.1%
Hearing	2,400	30.4%	1,254,200	32.8%
Ambulatory	4,600	29.5%	3,329,800	34.2%
Independent Living	2,900	27.0%	2,225,100	35.2%
Some College/Associate’s Degree – With Disability	12,600	36.9%	5,502,900	29.9%
Hearing	3,000	37.4%	1,224,500	32.0%
Ambulatory	5,700	36.6%	2,930,000	30.1%
Independent Living	3,900	36.1%	1,651,800	26.1%
Cognitive	5,100	34.4%	1,997,900	27.1%
Self-Care	1,600	32.4%	906,100	27.4%
Visual	1,400	23.6%	882,000	27.9%
Bachelor’s Degree or More – With Disability	5,700	16.8%	2,235,600	12.2%
Hearing	1,500	18.1%	598,200	15.6%
Ambulatory	2,800	17.9%	1,046,600	10.7%
Independent Living	1,800	17.0%	590,800	9.3%
Cognitive	1,800	12.0%	648,300	8.8%
Self-Care	600	11.6%	342,500	10.4%
Visual	400	7.3%	353,700	11.2%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009, American Community Survey				

Methods

The study was designed to gather input from various stakeholders. Three stakeholder groups were identified: 1) former and potential clients of vocational rehabilitation; 2) advocates for people with disabilities; and 3) providers of rehabilitation services. Three survey instruments were developed through the collaboration of two divisions of the North Dakota Department of Human Services, VR and Decision Support Services (DSS), to collect data on all stakeholder groups.

Survey questions were developed by modifying the 2007 North Dakota Triennial Needs Assessment Survey through consultation with stakeholders in DVR. All three surveys were designed to have some parallel questions in order to permit comparisons across groups.

The following research questions guided the development of survey questions for the comprehensive needs assessment.

1. What do clients/potential clients of VR perceive as their unmet needs and barriers to successful outcomes?
2. What do advocates for people with disabilities perceive as unmet needs and barriers to successful outcomes?
3. What do providers of rehabilitation services perceive as unmet needs and barriers to successful outcomes?
4. How do providers perceptions of needs and barriers differ from clients and advocates perceptions of needs and barriers?

The consumer survey was designed to elicit consumers' perspectives in four main areas. The survey asked background demographic information including age, county of residence, race, and type of disability. Second, respondents were asked about whether their employment service needs were being met. Next, respondents were given a list of specific employment service needs and asked whether each need was being met. Finally, respondents could provide open-ended suggestions about how to better meet the employment needs of individuals with disabilities.

The advocate and providers surveys were designed in the same structure as the consumer survey with the same four main areas. The demographic questions of each of these surveys were changed to account for the different information needs about each of these groups. Both the advocate and the provider

surveys were also asked to rank the top barriers to employment-related services and to rank the top employment needs that were not being met. In addition to these questions, respondents of the provider survey were also asked their training needs and how best to deliver trainings.

For the consumer stakeholder group, a survey of clients of the North Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation was chosen as the most effective method of accessing a large pool of individuals with disabilities in the state. To supplement client feedback, additional surveys were sought from the general public asking for responses from individuals with disabilities and their families. To create the consumer survey list a random sample of 1,000 open cases that were currently in a service status or had completed the program and were employed prior to closure was obtained. A paper-based survey was mailed to the entire list. In addition to the mailing list, NDDHS developed a news release inviting people with disabilities and their families to complete the consumer survey online.

The advocate and provider survey mailing lists were generated from a mailing list stored by VR. The VR state office administrators, along with input from DSS, reviewed the mailing lists to make additions and corrections as necessary.

All paper-based surveys were manually entered into Microsoft® Access 2010. A data quality review was conducted to ensure accuracy and high data quality during data entry. Online surveys were conducted through Survey Monkey® and combined with the manually entered data for data analysis.

Quantitative data from the surveys were analyzed using SAS® 9.3. Data analysis consisted of computing frequencies and descriptive statistics for the survey items with fixed response options. Open-ended survey questions, which yielded narrative responses from individuals, were analyzed by the researchers for themes or concepts that were expressed consistently by respondents

Some survey questions were recoded to create new variables. In the consumer survey, Question 2 was recoded for some analysis. In Question 2, respondents between 18 and 24 years were considered transition-age respondents due to them transitioning from school to the workforce. In Question 10 of the consumer survey, disability type was recoded for some analysis. Consumer respondents were asked which best described their disability from a list of nine choices. For analysis the list was categorized into four subgroups: Mental (Mental Illness / Emotional Disturbance, Abuse of Drugs or Alcohol); Cognitive (Learning Disability, Development Disability, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury); Physical (Orthopedic Impairment); Sensory (Sensory Impairments). Not all choices could be

subcategorized. The choice Degenerative Conditions could not be subcategorized and was left out of the groupings. Some respondents selected more than one choice and as a result a single survey may be represented in more than one category.

To determine the average number of employment services needs that are not being met, all employment services needs that were equal to, not being met, were summed by client. The sum of each client's unmet needs was totaled and divided by the total number of clients to produce the average number of employment services needs that are not being met.

Stakeholder Survey:

In 2011 the North Dakota Department of Human Services (NDDHS) conducted a stakeholder survey seeking public input about local and statewide human service needs and issues. NDDHS sent the survey by email to a variety of addresses including state employees and other contacts. NDDHS also drafted a news release asking for the input of clients, their family members, service providers, advocates, county staff, legislators and other interested parties. The survey asked open-ended questions about gaps in services, service access issues, other concerns, and solicited suggestions. The survey asked respondents about a variety of programs NDDHS administers. Vocational Rehabilitation was one of the fourteen programs addressed in the survey.

Due to the similarities between the stakeholder survey's open ended responses and the provider and advocate survey's open-ended responses, these responses were grouped for analysis. Common themes were identified by reading through responses from all surveys. Then each response was coded into one of the themes including no response and "other" for responses that did not fit into one of the themes or were only noted once.

Limitations:

Inherent in any type of research effort are limitations that may constrain the utility of the data that is generated. Therefore, it is important to highlight some of the most significant issues that may limit the ability to generalize the needs assessment findings to larger populations. Inherent in the methods used to collect data is the potential for bias in the selection of participants. The findings that are reported reflect only the responses of those who could be reached and who were willing to participate. A second significant concern is that the information gathered from respondents may not accurately represent the

broader concerns of all potential consumers and stakeholders. Data gathered from consumers and providers of employment services, for example, may reflect only the needs of individuals who are already receiving employment-related services, but may not represent the needs of individuals not utilizing employment-related services. Although efforts were made to gather information from a variety of stakeholders, it is not possible to assume with certainty that those who participated represent a fully representative sample.

Care should be taken when interpreting respondent's comments. First, respondent's comments to open-ended questions reflect the respondent's opinions and knowledge about the topic, but does not necessary reflect facts about the program or topic. Second, the needs assessment is specific to Vocational Rehabilitation. However, some respondents are unable to differentiate VR from other programs and services provided to individuals with disabilities. As a result some issues identified by respondents might not be directly related to VR.

Results

Consumer Surveys

Two hundred and forty-two consumer surveys were returned by December 7, 2011. Of those, 42 were submitted online and 200 were submitted through paper-based mailed surveys.

Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 70 years of age. Of the 242 respondents, 231 indicated they had some form of disability. Of the 242 respondents, 128 (54.0%) were female and 109 (46.0%) were male (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Demographic characteristics of consumer survey respondents.

Demographics	Consumer Respondents	
	N	Percent
Gender		
Male	109	46.0%
Female	128	54.0%
Did not respond	5	
Total	237	100.0%
Age Grouping		
18 - 24 Years of Age	95	40.4%
25 - 34 Years of Age	36	15.3%
35 - 44 Years of Age	30	12.8%
45 - 54 Years of Age	44	18.7%
55 - 64 Years of Age	29	12.3%
65 - 74 Years of Age	1	0.4%
Did not respond	7	
Total	235	100.0%

Consumer survey respondents lived in every region of North Dakota. Respondents lived in 31 of the 52 North Dakota counties. The highest percentage of respondents lived in the Bismarck region (30.7%) followed by Fargo (25.4%). The fewest number of respondents indicated they lived in the Williston region (1.3%). Fourteen consumers did not indicate their county of residence (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2: Consumer, Advocate, Provider Respondents by Region

		Consumers		Advocates		Providers	
		N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
I.	Williston	3	1.3%	21	20.6%	6	14.0%
II.	Minot	26	11.4%	30	29.4%	7	16.3%
III.	Devils Lake	10	4.4%	23	22.6%	12	27.9%
IV.	Grand Forks	27	11.8%	28	27.5%	8	18.6%
V.	Fargo	58	25.4%	33	32.4%	5	11.6%
VI.	Jamestown	24	10.5%	20	19.6%	12	27.9%
VII.	Bismarck	70	30.7%	41	40.2%	16	37.2%
VIII.	Dickinson	10	4.4%	26	25.5%	7	16.3%
Statewide				16	15.7%	3	7.0%
Did Not Respond		14		2		0	

Approximately 90% of respondents indicated they were white, while other race/ethnic groups were represented in percentages ranging from 3.8% (American Indian / Alaskan Native) to 0.42% (for both Asian and Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander). Of the respondents, 2.9% selected multiple races. Four respondents (1.7%) identified themselves as of Hispanic origin. Five survey respondents (2.1%) indicated they had immigrated to the U.S. in the last five years (Table 2.3).

Approximately 42% of respondents indicated that the highest education level they achieved was some college or an associate's degree. Another 35.4% of respondents had a high school diploma or less and 22.1% of respondents had at least a bachelor's degree (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3: Demographic characteristics of consumer survey respondents.

Demographics	Consumer Respondents	
	N	Percent
Race		
White	216	90.8%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	9	3.8%
Multiple Races	7	2.9%
Black or African American	4	1.7%
Asian	1	0.4%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	0.4%
Total	238	100.0%
Hispanic Ethnicity		
Yes	4	1.7%
No	236	98.3%
Total	240	100.0%
Education Level		
Below 9 th grade	3	1.3%
9 th to 12 th Grade, No Diploma	7	3.0%
High School Diploma, GED or Equivalent	73	31.1%
Some College or Associate Degree	100	42.3%
Bachelor's Degree	33	14.0%
Graduate-Level coursework/Degree	19	8.1%
Total	235	100.0%
Immigrated to U.S. in last five years		
Yes	5	2.1%
No	235	97.9%
Total	240	100.0%

Survey respondents were given a list of nine disability types to select from and asked to check all that applied. Respondents could also select “other” disability type. Table 2.4 indicates the disability types selected by the survey respondents. When asked which disability types best described their disability, the highest percentage of respondents identified themselves as having a Learning Disability (39.0%) followed by Mental Illness / Emotional Disturbance (34.6%). The lowest percentage (3.9%) of respondents identified Traumatic Brain Injury. People that identified themselves as having a Developmental Disability had the lowest education levels followed by respondents that selected Autism Spectrum Disorder. Respondents with a Degenerative Condition had the highest education levels (Table 2.4).

Table 2.4: Education distribution of consumer survey respondents by disability type (check all that apply)

	Total		Of Respondents that Selected Specific Disability Type											
			Below 9 th grade		9 th to 12 th Grade, No Diploma		High School Diploma, GED or Equivalent		Some College or Associate Degree		Bachelor's Degree		Graduate-Level Coursework / Degree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Learning Disability	90	39.0%	1	1.2%	4	4.6%	36	41.4%	41	47.1%	3	3.5%	2	2.3%
Mental Illness / Emotional Disturbance	80	34.6%	2	2.6%	2	2.6%	21	0.9%	32	41.0%	15	19.2%	6	7.7%
Orthopedic Impairment	42	18.2%	1	2.4%	0	0.0%	9	21.4%	21	50.0%	9	21.4%	2	4.8%
Sensory Impairments	35	15.2%	1	2.9%	2	5.7%	12	34.3%	9	25.7%	7	20.0%	4	11.4%
Degenerative Conditions	23	10.0%	0	0.0%	1	4.4%	2	8.7%	13	56.5%	6	26.1%	1	4.4%
Abuse of Drugs or Alcohol	22	9.5%	1	5.0%	0	0.0%	5	25.0%	10	50.0%	3	15.0%	1	5.0%
Autism Spectrum Disorder	18	7.8%	0	0.0%	1	5.6%	10	55.6%	6	33.3%	1	5.6%	0	0.0%
Developmental Disability	14	6.1%	0	0.0%	1	7.4%	10	71.4%	2	14.3%	1	7.1%	0	0.0%
Traumatic Brain Injury	9	3.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	22.2%	5	55.6%	1	11.1%	1	11.1%
Other	34	14.7%	1	3.1%	1	3.1%	7	21.9%	11	34.4%	9	28.1%	3	9.4%
Did Not Respond	11													

Clients can receive rehabilitation services from different types of providers: 1) Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs); 2) TANF/Job Services/Community Options; 3) Vocational Rehabilitation; or 4) Other.

Former or current recipients of employment-related services either through Vocational Rehabilitation or another agency comprised 82.2% of the survey respondents (n = 199). Twenty respondents (8.2%) indicated they did not receive employment-related services. Twenty three respondents (9.5%) did not answer whether they were receiving employment-related services. Of respondents that were receiving employment-related services, 177 (80.8%) received services through Vocational Rehabilitation (Table 2.5).

Table 2.5: Who is providing your employment-related services? (Check all that apply)

	N	Percent
Vocational Rehabilitation	177	80.8%
TANF / Job Services / Community Options	17	7.8%
Community Rehabilitation Provider	15	6.9%
Other	36	16.4%
Did not respond	23	

Clients were asked the extent to which their employment service needs had been met by agency and/or service providers with choices ranging from “Always” to “Never”. A higher percentage of respondents said that their needs have always or frequently been met by providers (57.0%) compared to those that said their needs were occasionally met (20.6%) and rarely or never met (22.5%) (Table 2.6).

Table 2.6: To what extent are the employment services needs being met by agency/service providers, by respondent type

	Consumers		Advocates		Providers	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Always	70	32.7%	1	1.0%	5	13.5%
Frequently	52	24.3%	45	46.9%	19	51.4%
Occasionally	44	20.6%	40	41.7%	7	18.9%
Rarely	23	10.8%	7	7.3%	4	10.8%
Never	25	11.7%	3	3.1%	2	5.4%
Did Not Respond	28		8		6	

Respondents were asked a series of 16 closed-ended (“Need is being met”, “Need is not being met”, “Does not apply”) questions about employment-related needs. Table 2.7 shows the percentages for each employment need.

The most commonly identified employment needs not being met were assistance with finding and/or keeping a job (19.1%), vocational guidance and career options (16.9%), and benefits planning (16.0%). Approximately 33% of respondents said all their needs were being met. An additional 29 people selected “Other” and added an open-ended response. The most common employment needs identified in the open-ended responses included:

- Funding for education
- Education support (e.g. tutoring)

- Access to employers with work environments friendly to persons with disabilities

Of the consumer respondents, the average respondent identified 1.6 employment needs that were not being met. Of the 92 respondents that had at least one employment need not being met, the average respondent had 4.3 employment needs that were unmet. A majority (60.9%) of consumer respondents did not identify any unmet employment needs, but the respondents that had unmet employment needs had multiple unmet needs (Table 2.7).

Table 2.7: Employment Needs of Consumer Respondents

	Need Is Being Met		Not Being Met		Does Not Apply	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Assistance with Finding and/or Keeping a Job	74	32.1%	44	19.1%	113	48.9%
Vocational Guidance and Career Options	118	51.1%	39	16.9%	74	32.1%
Benefits Planning	36	15.6%	37	16.0%	158	68.4%
Increased Opportunities for Self-Employment	36	15.6%	33	14.3%	162	70.1%
One-on-One Job Training	35	15.2%	29	12.6%	167	72.3%
On-Going Training, Support on the Job	56	24.2%	27	11.7%	148	64.1%
Workplace Relationship Training	29	12.6%	26	11.3%	176	76.2%
Housing	35	15.2%	25	10.8%	171	74.0%
Assistive Technology	64	27.7%	21	9.1%	146	63.2%
Physical and Mental Restoration Services	41	17.8%	21	9.1%	169	73.2%
Transportation	46	20.0%	20	8.7%	165	71.4%
Follow-up After Job Placement	42	18.2%	20	8.7%	169	73.2%
Independent Living Skills	25	10.8%	19	8.2%	187	81.0%
Youth to Adult Transition Employment Services	14	6.1%	14	6.1%	203	87.9%
Interpreter Services	11	4.8%	5	2.2%	215	93.1%

Transition-age respondents (18-24 years old) accounted for 40.4% of the respondents that provided an age. Transition-age respondents did not have strongly ranked employment needs; none of the employment needs were above twenty percent, instead the employment needs that were unmet were spread throughout the choices. Respondents 25 years of age and older identified multiple strongly ranked employment needs: assistance with finding and/or keeping a job (22.1%) and vocational guidance and career options (20.7%). Both age groups listed benefits planning and assistance with finding and/or keeping a job in their top three employment needs (Table 2.8).

Respondents, on average, identified 1.6 unmet employment service needs from the list provided. Transition-age respondents had a lower average number of employment service needs not being met than respondents 25 years of age and older (1.3 compared to 1.9). However, a higher percentage of transition-age respondents (16.3%) say their employment needs are never met than respondents 25 years of age and older (8.1%).

Table 2.8: Employment Needs of Consumer Respondents by Age Group

	Need is Not Being Met					
	18 – 24 Years (n = 95)			25 and Older (n = 140)		
	N	Percent	Rank	N	Percent	Rank
Assistance with Finding and/or Keeping a Job	12	12.6%	2	31	22.1%	1
Vocational Guidance and Career Options	9	9.5%	7	29	20.7%	2
Benefits Planning	13	13.7%	1	23	16.4%	3
Increased Opportunities for Self-Employment	11	11.6%	3	21	15.0%	4
One-on-One Job Training	10	10.5%	5	19	13.6%	5
Housing	6	6.3%	11	18	12.9%	6
Workplace Relationship Training	8	8.4%	9	17	12.1%	7
On-Going Training, Support on the Job	11	11.6%	3	16	11.4%	8
Physical and Mental Restoration Services	4	4.2%	14	16	11.4%	8
Follow-up After Job Placement	6	6.3%	11	14	10.0%	10
Assistive Technology	6	6.3%	11	14	10.0%	10
Transportation	9	9.5%	7	11	7.9%	12
Independent Living Skills	10	10.5%	5	9	6.4%	13
Youth to Adult Transition Employment Services	8	8.4%	9	6	4.3%	14
Interpreter Services	1	1.0%	15	4	2.9%	15

Respondents with a disability type in the subgroup mental health impairments had the highest average number of unmet employment needs (2.5). All other disability groups averaged between 1.8 (cognitive disabilities) and 1.6 (sensory and physical disabilities) unmet employment needs. When only respondents with at least one unmet employment need were included in the analysis mental health impairment still had the highest number of unmet needs (4.7) and sensory impairments had the lowest number of unmet employment needs (3.6) (Table 2.9).

Table 2.9: Average Number of Unmet Employment Needs by All Clients and only Clients with Unmet Needs

	Total Number of Unmet Needs	N	Average Number of Unmet Needs
Total			
All Clients	394	242	1.6
Clients with Unmet Needs	394	92	4.3
Sensory			
All Clients	59	35	1.6
Clients with Unmet Needs	59	16	3.6
Cognitive			
All Clients	204	113	1.8
Clients with Unmet Needs	204	45	4.5
Physical			
All Clients	70	42	1.6
Clients with Unmet Needs	70	17	4.1
Mental			
All Clients	224	88	2.5
Clients with Unmet Needs	224	47	4.7

Ranking employment needs that are not being met by the percent of respondents that selected the employment need shows a consistent result across disability types. When ranked, benefits planning, vocational guidance and career options, and assistance with finding and/or keeping a job were in the top three employment needs not being met by every disability subgroup (Table 2.10).

Table 2.10: Employment Needs of Consumer Respondents by Disability Type

	Need is Not Being Met											
	Cognitive (n = 113)			Physical (n = 42)			Mental (n = 88)			Sensory (n = 35)		
	N	Percent	Rank	N	Percent	Rank	N	Percent	Rank	N	Percent	Rank
Benefits Planning	22	19.5	1	7	16.7	3	20	22.7	3	8	22.9	1
Vocational Guidance and Career Options	21	18.6	2	8	19.1	1	20	22.8	2	5	14.3	2
Assistance with Finding and/or Keeping a Job	20	17.7	3	8	19.1	1	26	29.6	1	5	14.3	2
One-on-One Job Training	16	14.2	4	3	7.1	11	16	18.2	6	5	14.3	2
Increased Opportunities for Self-Employment	15	13.3	5	5	11.9	5	19	21.6	4	5	14.3	2
On-Going Training, Support on the Job	15	13.3	5	5	11.9	5	15	17.1	7	4	11.4	7
Independent Living Skills	14	12.4	7	2	4.8	13	9	10.2	12	3	8.6	11
Workplace Relationship Training	13	11.5	8	5	11.9	5	18	20.5	5	5	14.3	2
Transportation	13	11.5	8	4	9.5	9	11	12.5	10	4	11.4	7
Follow-up After Job Placement	12	10.6	10	5	11.9	5	11	12.5	11	2	5.7	12
Housing	12	10.6	10	3	7.1	11	14	15.9	9	4	11.4	7
Assistive Technology	10	8.9	12	4	9.5	9	9	10.2	12	4	11.4	7
Youth to Adult Transition Employment Services	10	8.6	13	1	2.4	15	8	9.1	14	1	2.9	13
Physical and Mental Restoration Services	9	8	14	6	14.3	4	15	17.1	7	1	2.9	13
Interpreter Services	1	0.9	15	1	2.4	14	3	3.4	15	1	2.9	13

Consumers were asked to provide any suggestions to best meet the unmet employment needs of individuals with disabilities. This was an open-ended question where respondents could write in a response. Common themes were identified by reading through responses from all consumer surveys. Then each response was coded into one of the themes including “no comment” and “other” for responses that did not fit into one of the themes or were only noted once.

The responses from other open-ended questions were also incorporated into this section when appropriate. The final response in question 11 allowed respondents to enter other employment needs that had not already been noted. A review of these responses showed some fit into the themes and were included in the analysis.

Ninety-three consumers responded to the open-ended question. The responses varied significantly, yet some patterns in the responses were observed. The most common comments were praise for the services provided or for a specific counselor. The following responses are a selection of these comments.

- *[My counselor] helped me in every aspect and went above and beyond my expectations and dreams.*
- *I am so very thankful to be able to go back to college and be retrained in an area which match my past education and work experience.*
- *I very much appreciated the help I received. As a college student I had no means of obtaining hearing aids even though I really needed them...I will always be extremely grateful for the help I received from VR.*
- *Whatever my needs, VR has helped me: classes, extra training, assistive technology, references, and referrals. The encouragement when I had set backs was huge. I don't know how well I would have been able to handle the disappointment and the challenges without the support of everyone at VR.*

Job Coaching and Counselor Skills:

Other than comments of praise, of the comments that could be placed into a theme, the most common comments pertained to job coaching and counselor skills and/or the response time of counselors. The following comments from respondents illustrate this issue:

- *I've had numerous job shadows with very little feedback [from my job coach] ...This has left me very disappointed.*
- *I found my counselor was essentially checked out. Services for the greater part of a year involved only two job referrals.*
- *New VR counselors do not know their job – better training is needed.*
- *Counselor doesn't respond to my phone calls...My analysis is they have way too much on their plates and too many [clients] to get back to.*
- *I feel sometimes they are too busy to set up an immediate appointment and when they do they are not prepared for you.*

Transportation:

The importance of providing transportation ranked highly. Respondents indicated the importance of driver's education and of providing transit. The following comments from respondents illustrate this issue.

- *VR should fund driving lessons for adults who have no one else to teach them. Some people cannot afford private driving lessons or drivers education from a high school.*
- *VR reps are diligently trying to provide education and support for individuals who do not or cannot drive, please try to assist them to better meet these needs of transportation. We need driving education for adults.*
- *Help those who don't have driver's licenses get bus passes or something.*
- *Need transit ticket for school and work or won't be able to get around area.*

Employer Referrals:

The ability to connect with employers and receive referrals was a concern for some respondents. The following comments from respondents illustrate this concern:

- *VR should take an active role in providing recommendations to employers to hire individuals with a disability.*
- *[Have] employers lined up to interview with that would be a good work place for [people with disabilities].*

- *VR should work more closely with state facilities to keep closer tabs on what employment is available in state jobs. State and federal positions for people with disabilities are good opportunities that some are missing out on because they are unaware of them.*

Service Issues:

Respondents raised several issues about services they had received through VR and other employment service providers. These comments fell into several categories including a need for better communication, having too much bureaucracy, and poor customer service. The following comments from respondents illustrate these concerns:

- *I feel communication via telephone and email should be better.*
- *I know I have a new caseworker, but the communication has been a single letter. My case worker has changed several times – I don't even know who it is.*
- *It would be nice if all the paperwork and similar would be quicker.*
- *Some program options are difficult to determine and are sometimes too rigid. There is a need for flexibility to meet needs, particularly for those who are on the border of eligibility requirements.*

Assistance Provided:

Respondents describe a variety of issues related to services provided by employment-related service agencies. These comments focused on specific services including assistive technology, training and/or career counseling, health insurance, tutoring, housing, benefits planning, interpreters, and education support.

- *Ongoing training to update computer skills.*
- *I need more help with reading comprehension. I have not had much help with it.*
- *I need someone to explain what help I can get [through VR].*
- *I'd be interested in getting help with school related activities such as books, tools, and classes.*
- *I'd like more help with school training such as help with rent or help with classes, clothing, or transportation.*

- *Should consider adding Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) from ZVRS Business Video Solutions. This [company] provides interpreters at appointments when needed. Since ND doesn't have many interpreters.*
- *Assistance with tutoring and financial assistance.*
- *I think the computer programs that assist a person who can't take notes because of hand issues should be covered. New [computer] programs help you by automatically typing what the teacher says.*
- *I have been told that I have to have a goal or an area chosen before VR can help...How can one choose when you are not told what you can get help with, or what one can do with so many types of disabilities that each has an effect on any chosen.*

Provider Demographics

Out of a total of 164 surveys mailed out, forty-three provider surveys were returned by December 7, 2011, yielding a response rate of 26.2%. Of responses submitted, 26 were submitted through paper-based mail surveys and 17 were submitted online.

Of respondents, 23.8% worked for Community Rehabilitation Providers and 76.8% worked for some other type of organization (Table 2.11). Of the other type of organizations the most common included:

- The education system and special education
- County Social Service and state agency
- Other disability provider

Table 2.11: What is the type of organization that you work for?

	N	Percent
Community Rehabilitation Provider	10	23.8%
Other	32	76.2%
Did Not Respond	1	

Of the 43 respondents, 31 (79.5%) described themselves as the director of their organization. Another 9.5% described their position as supervisor and 18.0% selected their position as other (Table 2.12).

Table 2.12: How would you describe the position with the organization for which you currently work?

	N	Percent
Director	31	79.5%
Supervisor	4	9.5%
Other	7	18.0%
Did Not Respond	1	

Respondents provided employment-related services in every region in North Dakota (Table 2.2). The highest percentage of respondents provided employment-related services out of the Bismarck region (37.2%) followed by the Jamestown (27.9%) and Devils Lake regions (27.9%). The fewest number of respondents indicated they provided services in the Fargo region (11.6%). Seven percent of respondents indicated they provided services statewide.

Of respondents whose organizations had at least one year of experience providing employment-related services, the organizations averaged 27 years of experience with 43.8% having between 20 – 29 years of experience (Table 2.13).

Table 2.13: How many years has your organization been providing employment-related services?

	N	Percent
0	3	9.4%
1 – 9 Years	2	6.3%
10 – 19 Years	1	3.1%
20 – 29 Years	14	43.8%
30 – 39 Years	9	28.1%
40 – 49 Years	1	3.1%
50 or more years	2	6.3%
Did Not Respond	11	

For agencies that serve at least one client, respondents reported a median of 31.5 clients served by their agency per month. Fifty-three percent of respondents reported their agency served less than 50 clients. Two respondents reported their agency served more than 300 clients per month (Table 2.14).

Table 2.14: On average, how many consumers receive employment-related services from your agency per month?

	N	Percent
0 Consumers	2	6.3%
< 50 Consumers	17	53.1%
50 – 99 Consumers	6	18.8%
100 – 300 Consumers	5	15.6%
> 300 Consumers	2	6.3%
Did Not Respond	11	

Respondents were asked how many direct service staff were employed either full or part-time by their agency. Respondents' agencies had a total of 772 direct service staff. Of agencies with direct service staff, the agencies had a median of 7.5 employees. The agencies had a median of 5.0 full-time employees and 1.5 part-time employees. The highest percentage of direct service staff had more than five years of experience and was employed full time. Full-time employees with five or more years of experience made up 53.4% of the total number of direct service staff (Table 2.15).

Table 2.15: Of Respondents, the Number of Part and Full-Time Direct Service Staff

	Total Number of Direct Service Staff	Percent of Total
Less than Six Months – # Full-Time	12	1.5%
Six months to One Year - # Full-Time	31	4.0%
One Year to Two Years - # Full-Time	48	6.2%
Two Years to Five Years - # Full-Time	92	11.9%
Five or More Years - # Full-Time	412	53.4%
Less than Six Months – # Part-Time	38	4.9%
Six months to One Year - # Part-Time	26	3.3%
One Year to Two Years - # Part-Time	32	4.1%
Two Years to Five Years - # Part-Time	36	4.6%
Five or More Years - # Part-Time	45	5.8%

Advocate Demographics:

Out of a total of 204 surveys mailed out, 104 advocate surveys were returned by December 7, 2011, yielding a response rate of 50.9 %. Of responses submitted, 40 were submitted through paper-based mail surveys and 64 were submitted online.

Advocate respondents were asked the nature of their advocacy focus. Approximately 26% identified themselves as a board/council member for organization that advocates for individuals with disabilities. Thirty-seven percent of respondents selected “other” (Table 2.16). Common responses from advocates that selected “other” included:

- CAP
- Employer
- State Employee
- Veteran Advocate

Table 2.16: Please identify the nature of your advocacy focus

	N	Percent
Board/Council member for organization that advocates for individuals with disabilities	27	26.5%
Individual advocate, not associated with any formal group or organization	19	18.6%
Family member of individual with disabilities	19	18.6%
Board/Council member for a provider of services to individuals with disabilities	16	15.7%
Friend of individual with disabilities	15	14.7%
Other	37	36.3%
Did not respond	2	

Advocates were asked which disabilities their advocacy efforts were focused on. Seventy-six percent of respondents identified mental illness / emotional disturbance as a focus of their advocacy efforts. Approximately 55% identified learning disability, sensory impairments, and/or traumatic brain injury as a focus of their advocacy efforts. The fewest respondents identified abuse of drugs or alcohol as the focus of their efforts (Table 2.17).

Table 2.17: Please mark all options that best describe the disabilities around which your advocacy efforts are focused?

	N	Percent
Mental Illness / Emotional Disturbance	73	76.0%
Sensory Impairments	53	55.2%
Learning Disability	53	55.2%
Traumatic Brain Injury	53	55.2%
Developmental Disability	50	52.1%
Orthopedic Impairment	46	47.9%
Autism Spectrum Disorder	45	46.9%
Degenerative Conditions	44	45.8%
Abuse of Drugs or Alcohol	28	29.9%
Other	5	5.2%
Did not respond	8	

Provider and Advocate Survey Questions:

Providers were asked from a list of employment services, which their agency currently provides and which additional services it could be providing to better meet their customers' needs. Approximately 70% of agencies provided job coaching and 64.7% offered independent living skills. Approximately 44% of agencies provided situational assessments and/or job placement

and follow up and 5.9% said they could provide those two services in addition to those already provided to better meet their customers' needs. Providers identified supported employment (14.7%) and independent living skills (14.7%) as services they could provide to better meet their customer's needs (Table 2.18).

Table 2.18: Percentage of Respondents that Selected Employment Services Their Agency Provides or Could Be Providing

	Currently Provide		Additional Services We Could Be Providing To Better Meet the Needs of Our Customers	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Job Coaching	24	70.6%	1	2.9%
Independent Living Skills	22	64.7%	5	14.7%
Job Readiness Training	21	61.8%	4	11.8%
Workplace Relationship Training (Soft Skills)	21	61.8%	3	8.8%
Job Development Training	19	55.9%	3	8.8%
Supported Employment	17	50.0%	5	14.7%
Situational Assessments	15	44.1%	2	5.9%
Job Placement and Follow-Up	15	44.1%	2	5.9%

Organizations were subcategorized by size for further analysis. Organizations that provided employment-related services to more than thirty clients per month were categorized as large organizations. Organizations that provided employment-related services to thirty or fewer clients per month were categorized as small organizations. On average larger organizations provide more types of employment services than small organizations. Large organizations provide an average of 5.4 employment-related services from the list of eight. Small organizations averaged 3.6 employment-related services. Every employment-related service was offered by more than sixty percent of large organizations whereas only 30.8% of small organizations offered job placement and follow-up, 38.7% offered situational assessments, and 46.2% offered job development training. Only two employment-related services were offered by over 60% of small organizations (Table 2.19).

Table 2.19: Employment Services Provided by Large and Small Agencies

Employment Services	Currently Provide			
	≤ 30 Clients		> 30 Clients	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Job Readiness Training	9	69.2%	10	71.4%
Independent Living Skills Training	9	69.2%	9	64.3%
Job Coaching	7	53.9%	13	92.9%
Workplace Relationship Training (Soft Skills)	7	53.9%	10	71.4%
Supported Employment	7	53.9%	9	64.3%
Job Development Training	6	46.2%	11	78.6%
Situational Assessments	5	38.7%	9	64.3%
Job Placement and Follow-up	4	30.8%	10	71.4%

Provider respondents were asked to identify the top three barriers that impeded their ability to provide services from a list of ten services. The number one barrier respondents identified as impeding their ability to provide services was funding for agency operations and services followed by community perception of people with disabilities. The third barrier identified was a tie with 38.2% of providers selecting funding for staff and geographic location of, or distance to, consumers. No providers selected VR staff training and 5.9% selected staff knowledge of disability and functional limitations (Table 2.20).

Table 2.20: From your experience with individuals with significant disabilities, please select the top three barriers that impede your ability to provide services.

	Provider		Advocate	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Funding For Agency Operations And Services	16	47.1%	39	42.4%
Community Perception Of People With Disabilities	14	41.2%	37	40.2%
Geographic Location Of, Or Distance To , Consumers	13	38.2%	37	40.2%
Funding For Staff	13	38.2%	27	29.4%
Funding For Extended Services	12	35.3%	43	46.7%
Insufficient Community Services	10	29.4%	21	22.8%
Agency Staff Turnover	3	8.8%	18	19.6%
Staff Turnover	3	8.8%	13	14.1%
Staff Knowledge Of Disability And Functional Limitations	2	5.9%	15	16.3%
VR Staff Training	0	0.0%	6	6.5%
Other	11	25.6%	15	16.3%
Did not respond	9		12	

Providers were asked to select the top three employment needs that are not being met. The highest percent of providers, 31.4%, identified benefits planning and/or youth to adult transition employment services as an employment need not being met. The third most selected employment need not being met was assistance with finding and/or keeping a job. The least selected employment needs were independent living skills and follow-up after job placement (Table 2.21).

In comparison, the highest number of advocate respondents identified assistance with finding and/or keeping a job, (44.6%) followed by transportation (34.8%). The third most selected employment need identified by advocates was housing. The least selected employment need identified by advocates was interpreter (Table 2.21).

Table 2.21: Please consider the employment needs listed below and mark the top three that are not being met.

	Provider		Advocate	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Benefits Planning	11	31.4%	17	18.5%
Youth To Adult Transition Employment Services	11	31.4%	16	17.4%
Assistance With Finding and/or Keeping A Job	10	28.6%	41	44.6%
Transportation	9	25.7%	32	34.8%
On-Going Training, Support On The Job	8	22.9%	28	30.4%
Vocational Guidance and Career Options	8	22.9%	23	25.0%
Workplace Relationship Training	8	22.9%	15	16.3%
Housing	7	20.0%	30	32.6%
One-On-One Job Training	7	20.0%	17	18.5%
Increased Opportunities For Self-Employment	7	20.0%	14	15.2%
Physical and Mental Restoration Services	4	11.4%	12	13.0%
Assistive Technology	4	11.4%	10	10.9%
Interpreter	4	11.4%	3	3.3%
Independent Living Skills	3	8.6%	12	13.0%
Follow-Up After Job Placement	3	8.6%	10	10.9%
Other	2	4.7%	8	8.7%
Did not respond	8		12	

As table 2.6 illustrates fewer advocates said agency/service providers were meeting the employment needs of individuals with disabilities than providers. Fifty-six percent of advocates said agencies always or frequently met the needs of individuals compared to 64.9% of providers. However, more providers said that agencies rarely or never met the employment needs of individuals with disabilities than advocates. Consumers were asked a slightly different question, whether their needs had been met, and as a result are not directly comparable (Table 2.6).

Providers were asked to identify their top three training needs. The training need most often selected by providers was job coaching strategies” (40.6%) followed by job development and/or job readiness training/soft skills (34.4%). The least selected training need was writing progress notes and/or disclosure (3.1%) (Table 2.22).

Table 2.22: What are your top three training needs?

	N	Percent
Job Coaching Strategies	13	40.6%
Job Development	11	34.4%
Job Readiness Training/Soft Skills	11	34.4%
Marketing	10	31.3%
Supported Employment	9	28.1
Working With Employers	9	28.1%
Reasonable Accommodations	8	25.0%
Functional Limitations As They Relate To Work	8	25.0%
Disabilities	4	12.5%
VR Process	4	12.5%
Writing Progress Notes	1	3.1%
Disclosure	1	3.1%

Providers were asked to identify what resources they used for training beyond their internal trainers. Beyond their in-house trainers, 71.0% of respondents' organizations used training from Vocational Rehabilitation and 54.8% used training from Minot State University. Eight respondents included other resources including trainings through contacts and internet searches (Table 2.23).

Table 2.23: What resources do you use for training beyond your internal trainers?

	N	Percent
Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)	22	71.0%
Minot State University	17	54.8%
North Dakota Association Of Community Providers (NDACP)	11	35.5%
Technical Assistance And Continuing Education (TACE)	7	22.6%
Other	8	25.8%
Did Not Respond	12	

When providers were asked the best way for their staff to access training, 67.7% identified in person and/or webinars. The least selected training method was Skype at 19.4% (Table 2.24).

Table 2.24: What would be the best way for your staff to access training?

	N	Percent
In Person	21	67.7%
Webinars	21	67.7%
Video conference	13	41.9%
Written Materials	11	35.5%
Skype	6	19.4%
Other	0	0.0%
Did Not Respond	12	

VR Stakeholder Survey

The Department of Human Services stakeholder survey along with the provider and advocate surveys provided insight into important issues concerning VR and employment-related services. The responses varied yet some patterns in the responses were observed. Responses were categorized into two general areas: North Dakota issues (e.g. the job market) and service issues (e.g. issues pertaining to employment-related services and VR).

ND Issues:

Among the responses pertaining to North Dakota issues, the responses could be subcategorized into two themes. The first theme applied to the ND job market. Responses indicate the difficulty in finding jobs in North Dakota and possible incentives for hiring people with disabilities. The following comments illustrate this issue:

Jobs in North Dakota:

- *Due to the extremely rural area, job opportunities are extremely limited. Self-employment is about the only opportunity for many. Options for these people would help them decide a career path.*
- *We continue to struggle with the quality of employment for people with serious mental illness. Jobs tend to be in the service industry (restaurant, hotels, janitorial). For some these jobs are not fulfilling – i.e. college grads are not able to find work in their field.*
- *Older citizens, blue collar workers with no computer skills and an ongoing fear of the technology in the workplace. Once displaced from previous employment many of these*

people don't have the skills that grade-schoolers have for fitting into a new field of future employment.

- *More incentive for employers. They are in the business to make a profit. To get someone a job the employer needs to have some fiscal advantages as they are not going to do it out of goodness. This is the USA and the dollar drives everything.*
- *Make it more desirable to employ people with disabilities with rewards, tax credits, promotional advertising, etc.*

Oil Activity in North Dakota:

The second theme pertaining to North Dakota, regarded the issues related to oil activity. Responses highlighted the strains oil activity has on people with disabilities. The following comments illustrate this issue:

- *[Oil region] have increased responsibilities due to physical, financial, cultural changes in the communities, all the while being short-staffed. I have concerns that the staff may burn out trying to do comprehensive, meaningful work with an area population facing additional stressors in their lives.*
- *With the oil field activities and Minot/Bismarck flooding, housing, transportation, and the cost of living has made it difficult for individuals to keep up with paying the bills. We need to have a better handle on the situation by either bringing in higher paying jobs (not oil field jobs) or provide training opportunities to individuals to upgrade their employment skills.*
- *We will see an increase in injured workers, the poor who can't afford to live here and need to have skills to have meaningful employment, those left behind by transient workers. It is just beginning in the oil patch.*
- *Partner with the oil industry so they pay for their damaged and cast off employees.*
- *Due to housing and staff shortage it is difficult for our area. Salaries are low compared to other employment in the area for staff.*

Access to Services:

Among the responses pertaining to service issues, the responses could be subcategorized into multiple themes. One theme identified was access to services. Stakeholders brought up different

issues within this theme. Barriers to access included a lack of services within a moderate distance and/or a lack of transportation to get to those services. The following comments illustrate this issue:

- *[Transit] supports the services and the increased demand on our present system are increasing. More employment-related rides for all shifts. Once again increased funding would assist in the needs of transit.*
- *There are services available on the reservation, but maybe not enough. Lack of transportation.*
- *I would like to see a VR counselor located at United Tribes Technical College (UTTC) to oversee many VR clients who attend UTTC or are from surrounding areas located close to Bismarck.*
- *It would be nice to have VR staff start working with students in placement settings from the regional office in which the placement resides. Instead, they are told to contact their home region office and the involvement is minimal at best.*

VR Counselor Training:

A second theme identified concerned training provided to VR counselors and employment service agencies and consistency within those organizations when applying requirements. The following comments illustrate this issue:

- *VR seems to need job coaches that are specifically trained to do job finding.*
- *Continued efforts to promote consistency among VR regional staff practices regarding eligibility requirements, participation in IEP meetings, etc.*
- *Additional training for counselors regarding self-employment would be helpful.*
- *Have VR counselors or units do in-service [training] for county social service staff so there is increased awareness and understanding of the program/goals.*
- *There is a concern with the quality of or thoroughness of assessments / evaluations.*

Transition between Youth and Adults:

Respondents expressed concern about the transition between youth and adult. One of the primary concerns was the age at which students start transition services. The following comments illustrate this issue:

- *There is a need for greater job coaching and supportive employment services offered by VR to young adults 18 to 21 years of age. This population of young adults is not being supported via VR/Human Services.*
- *VR services shouldn't have to wait until the child is 18 years old and out of school.*
- *Won't see students until senior year – too late.*
- *Consider beginning vocational planning at age 14 rather than 16.*
- *We have many individuals on the ASD that will be leaving the safety of the school system. If they're not able to find jobs or go to post-secondary education right away, it leaves a "hole" in their planning. They then become adults that need jobs to support independence. Colleges are starting to take notice of ASD unique needs at the collegiate level, such as mentors, weekly counseling exclusively for those with ASD, having a very structured routine etc... These students need "friends" and mentors that can help guide them through what it means to be college freshmen.*
- *Career planning and/or discussions with youth enrolled in public schools. Need to encourage youth to conduct career and occupational research. Youth with disabilities should plan to enter the workforce the same as youth without disabilities. They do not plan or think about careers because parents and instructors still believe people with disabilities cannot or should not work. The old "care for" model needs to end. Youth with disabilities need to know they have a future life. A full life in the community, which includes employment and income.*
- *Students need to apply to VR services as early as necessary to benefit from vocation guidance and career development.*

Eligibility:

Survey respondents described a variety of concerns related to eligibility. Most eligibility criteria are defined by federal regulations and cannot be changed by North Dakota Vocational

Rehabilitation. Respondent's comments that pertained to federal guidelines were still included to highlight their areas of concern. This category encompasses a wide array of needs including opening employment services to a larger population, changing requirements for those in the program, and decreasing wait time for determining eligibility. The following comments illustrate this issue:

- *Counseling [should be] available to those who request it regardless of their ability to pay.*
- *VR should open up its eligibility process to serve more people with higher incomes.*
- *VR should not require college students to take out loans.*
- *People on disability should not be subject to overpayment schedules the way they are, people with disabilities pay enough of a toll just with a disability. They do not need the wrath of social security disability hanging over them about limited income if they are able to do more so be it, because believe me they have paid their share.*
- *Revise the guidelines to remove arbitrary limits on services to insure people with the most significant disabilities have access to the necessary services to find and maintain employment based on their interests, abilities, etc.*
- *The people [I refer to VR] are tired of waiting for the cumbersome system. They all wait until they are penniless and then have nothing to see them through all the lengthy training educational processes and give up and take the first minimum wage job they can land just to survive.*
- *Gap in time from initial application to being accepted or denied.*
- *VR is not willing to provide employment services to the most vulnerable individuals who do not meet the criteria of the Supported Employment Program.*

Employment Opportunities:

Survey respondents described a variety of concerns related to employment opportunities focused on by VR. This issue focuses on two distinct areas. First, respondents question the policy/ideology of VR counselors and employment service agencies that pressures clients to take certain jobs regardless of the clients goals and/or experience. The following comments illustrate this issue:

- *The apparent belief by the VR staff that each consumer should take whatever job is found for them, exclusive of the consumer's training, experience and education.*
- *There is room to increase employment opportunities that coincide with the hopes and dreams of people with disabilities.*
- *There needs to be more people working within the system to help people get jobs and to look at the individuals situation more closely than to turn people away and not help them with any of their needs.*
- *Support individuals to pursue vocational goals of their choice in the counseling phase so they can make an informed decision verses just being told it is not an option.*

Second, respondents indicated more resources should be focused on supported and/or self-employment. The following comments illustrate this issue:

- *In many instances DVR counselors indicate their lack of knowledge on self-employment.*
- *DVR needs to take a more active role in helping people with disabilities to develop self-employment as a career option since they are the experts on rehabilitation of people with disabilities.*
- *There seems to be a lack of resources for supported employment in ND, many who need it are not getting it.*

Funding:

The level of funding for VR, employment-related services, and related programs was repeatedly raised by respondents. Respondents also called for a reduction in caseload per counselor. The following comments highlight this issue.

- *Continue to fund the program and supporting programs. Extended services and supported employment are very important.*
- *Better training and reimbursement to serve individuals with more challenging needs. Funding for social security benefits planning (WIPA), transportation reimbursement.*
- *[VR should] budget to serve rural areas including reservations and look at reimbursement and quality outcomes for people served.*
- *Reduce the caseload for VR counselors or provide them with aides or techs to help them with client services. Take a more team approach to services.*

- *There seems to be a lack of resources for supported employment in ND. Many who need it are not getting it...VR needs to fund adequate job coaching for people with the most severe disabilities.*

Collaboration:

Survey respondents identified VR collaboration as an issue that should be addressed. The two main programs that respondents identified as needing to have better collaboration were schools and other state agencies. The following comments highlight this issue.

- *More, more, more collaboration with schools in bridging the gap from high school into employment.*
- *Partnership among DJS, DHS, and DOE to develop a clear path and understanding of services and responsibilities among the three departments.*
- *The current system is disconnected. Our VR workers seem to want to determine how schools meet their needs but are reluctant to be involved with students before they exit high school.*

Community Education:

Another concern for respondents was the lack of knowledge about VR services by the general public and employers. Respondents recommended VR work to educate the community about available services and educate employers hiring people with disabilities. The following comments illustrate this issue.

- *I think the general public does not know much about this program.*
- *[VR] needs to target general public not just those already in the DHS system.*
- *More community education...to change the stigma about hiring individuals with disabilities and showing that they can be very efficient and effective employees.*
- *Work with the larger corporations to change some of the positions they hire individuals with disabilities to do. Instead of just greeting, expand into cashier, stocking, technology, etc. Some of the customers we work with at our agency are never given the chance to expand into a different position.*

Extended Services:

Throughout the different surveys, respondents identified issues with extended services. Extended services is not administered by NDVR, but the issue was raised repeatedly and as a result is highlighted in this section. The main issues identified concerned a gap between programs and the restrictions on those who could receive the services. The following comments illustrate this issue:

- *Extended Services - there is no services that are clearly defined for those that “fall through the cracks” and no longer are eligible for DD services but aren’t about to get VR.*
- *There is a big gap in moving from VR SEP to MH Extended Services. The eligibility criteria for MH Extended Services is overly restrictive and the funding appears very limited to support the most severely challenged.*
- *Extended services – Need more people to receive services, but program has unrealistic rules for some people.*
- *Extended services...have always been confusing not only among those providing the service but the information coming from the department as well. There was never clarity of whether hours were available and if there were hours, a standardized formula for providers to understand was not available or inconsistent or misunderstood at best.*

Assistance/Training:

Respondents identified a number of services and/or other types of assistance that they felt were important for VR to provide to clients. These services varied and included everything from providing assistive technology and job training to housing needs. The following comments illustrate the issue.

- *An assistive technology assessment should be part of the comprehensive assessment. If AT is identified, individuals should be able to access this technology prior to employment in order to fully participate in the assessment process job development and placement and be prepared to demonstrate to an employer the ability to use technology to do the essential functions of the job.*

- *There is a serious lack of interpreter services [for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing] statewide, which is a deterrent for young people wishing to attend training or community college after high school.*
- *Deaf individuals often struggle with language so may need remedial classes to prepare them for higher level college course work. I see a huge need for more soft skills training that will enable these individuals to seek, retain and maintain employment.*
- *I really think that individuals with disabilities need to have the on-site job coaching... [Individual's] job coach has a lot of clients and it's difficult to get out to our site, but [the job coach] is needed.*
- *One on one job training at the work site with close follow-up after client has mastered the job to aid in keeping the position and solving relationships which interfere with good working relationships. Helping the client cope with relationship difficulties before it results in job loss.*
- *The problems are a lack of affordable housing for people with disabilities and job training and life skills training for those that are not [working]. Affordable housing for people with disabilities would be beneficial to the whole state.*

Benefits planning:

Respondents identified benefits planning as another important service to be offered. Multiple respondents suggested that benefit planners are important in keeping clients in work by explaining the impact of employment on their benefits. The following comments illustrate this issue.

- *The benefits planners throughout the state are extremely important to people with disabilities. Planners help people realize they can work without jeopardizing their benefits and/or realize they may be able to work full-time without SS benefits.*
- *[Benefit planners] are vital in assisting consumers and their families to understand the impact of benefits upon employment. They carefully explain to consumers that they don't need to "not work" or "work part-time" to keep their social security benefits. Every person they assist with either staying with work or going back to work brings money back into the SS system...*

- *Training for program managers and provider staff on available resources so that maximum access is afforded to those who would benefit.*

VR Policy:

Respondents raised numerous issues about VR policies and/or clients perception of VR policies. Responses about VR policy were separated into two categories. The first category dealing with VR policy focused on changes on the client level to create more successful outcomes including how long clients receive follow-up. The following comments illustrate this issue.

- *Follow clients for a longer period of time suggested as possibly helpful.*
- *Too much talking, not enough doing. VR services should be out there helping people pound the streets instead of doing groups about what having a job might look like.*
- *I think more work needs to be done by those working with individuals with disabilities in truly getting to know the individuals they are working with...If more time could be used in this manner, job carving may be able to take place and there would be greater job satisfaction and less time in the end looking for another job placement.*

The second category dealing with VR policy focused on changes to the VR system on an administrative level. The following comments illustrate this point.

- *The reimbursement through VR providers seems to be very confusing. At times it seems the VR counselors here do not know their own system and end up consuming things more when it comes to reimbursement to providers.*
- *It takes way too long to get into VR. They need a better plan for speedy service. Some people don't need services from VR for the long haul.*
- *VR needs to separate itself from the Human Service Centers. It is not a clinical program.*
- *We very much like the summer employment grant that is available for our students. Please continue that program.*
- *The requirement to meet a certain number of closures should not be a performance measure for counselors as this creates pressure to create closures rather than meet individual's needs. There could be other ways to encourage successful closures.*

Abuses of the System:

A few respondents indicated VR needs to emphasize that employment is the client's responsibility. The following comments illustrate this issue.

- *It needs to be stressed to [individuals with disabilities] that it is their responsibility to get and keep a job, we might help them but it is their responsibility. I feel that [employment service agencies] are seriously missing the mark, they need to step up to the plate and deal with hard to place individuals instead of sending them elsewhere.*
- *A lot of people abuse VR services. They are so caught up in getting a large number of people and services are not that good.*

Grievance Process:

Respondents indicated VR should have a policy in place to handle clients' grievances and issues. NDVR has a grievance system in place called the Client Assistance Program (CAP), but some respondents may have been unaware of the program. The following comments illustrate this issue:

- *Assuring there is a sound grievance process in place.*
- *Be sure to listen to and give credence to the people who complain*

Conclusion

This report details the results of multiple methods in assessing rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities in North Dakota. The needs assessment in North Dakota is the result of a cooperative effort between the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and the State Rehabilitation Council. The report was prepared by the Division of Decision Support Services. These efforts solicited information concerning the needs of persons with disabilities from individuals with disabilities, service providers, and advocates for individuals with disabilities for the purpose of providing DVR and the SRC with direction for addressing structure and resource demands.

It is not the purpose of this assessment to recommend actions that should be taken in response to these identified needs. Rather, the purpose is to call attention to concerns and perceptions of individuals who are receiving or could potentially receive employment-related services. Also included in this report are the concerns and perceptions of people advocating for individuals with disabilities and providers of employment-related services for individuals with disabilities. It is anticipated that DVR and the State Rehabilitation Council will use this information in a strategic manner that can be directed toward remediation of concerns.

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Appendix One: Respond Rate Tables

Table A.1: Response Rate of surveys and questions

Question	N	Percent
Consumer		
Consumer Survey Response Rate	242	24.2%
What is your county of residence?	228	94.2%
What is your age?	235	97.1%
Gender	237	97.9%
Are you of Hispanic origin?	240	99.1%
Please mark below options that best describe your race.	238	98.3%
Please indicate the highest level of education you have completed.	235	97.1%
Have you immigrated to the United States within the past 5 years?	240	99.1%
Who is providing your employment-related services?	219	90.5%
To what extent are the employment services that you need, or have needed, been met by agency/service providers?	214	88.4%
What options below best describe your disability?	231	95.5%
For each of the employment needs listed below, please mark what best describes your situation.	231	95.5%
Provider		
Provider Survey Response Rate	43	26.2%%
What is the type of organization that you work for?	42	97.7%%
How would you describe your current position with the organization for which you work?	42	97.7%
In what region/counties do you provide employment-related services?	40	93.0%
How many years has your organization been providing employment-related services?	32	74.4%
On average, how many consumers receive employment-related services from your agency per month?	32	74.4%
To what extent are the employment services needed by individuals with disabilities being met by your agency?	37	86.0%
How many direct service staff do you have working either full or part-time?	32	74.4%
Please check all of the employment services your agency currently provides and any additional services you could be providing to better meet the needs of your customers.	34	79.1%
From your experience with individuals with significant disabilities, please select the top three barriers that impede your ability to provide services.	34	79.1%
Please consider the employment needs listed below and mark the top three that are not being met.	35	81.4%
What are your top three training needs?	32	74.4%
What resources do you use for training beyond your internal trainers?	31	72.1%
What would be the best way for your staff to access training?	31	72.1%
Advocate		
Advocate Survey Response Rate	103	50.1%
Please identify the nature of your advocacy focus?	102	98.1%

In what Region/counties do your advocacy efforts focus?	102	98.1%
To what extent are the employment services needed by individuals with disabilities being met by agency/service providers?	96	92.3%
Please mark below all options that best describe the disabilities around which your advocacy efforts are focused?	96	92.3%
From your knowledge of individuals' disabilities and providers' abilities to offer services, please select what you believe are the top three barriers that hinder providers' ability to deliver services.	92	88.5%
Please consider the employment needs of people for whom you advocate listed below and mark the top three that are not being met.	92	88.5%

Appendix Two: News Release

NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services

600 East Boulevard Avenue, Bismarck ND 58505

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 8, 2011

Contact: LuWanna Lawrence, Assistant Public Information Officer, 701-328-1892

Vocational Rehabilitation Invites Interested Parties to Participate in a Statewide Needs Assessment Survey

The N.D. Department of Human Services' Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, along with the State Rehabilitation Council, is conducting a statewide survey to determine vocational rehabilitation service delivery needs and program priorities for the next three years. People with disabilities and their families are invited to complete the survey online by

December 2, 2011. It is online at www.surveymonkey.com/s/DKXGBWH.

"The needs assessment survey is a useful tool that can help identify any service gaps and opportunities to increase the employment of individuals that experience a disability," said Russ Cusack, director of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. "The information gained through the needs assessment process supports the division's continuous improvement through collaboration with other organizations."

The survey asks 12-questions about gaps in employment services for people with disabilities including vocational guidance and career options, one-on-one job training, self-employment opportunities, housing, workplace relationship training, youth-to-adult transition employment services, as well as other concerns. All responses will remain anonymous.

Individuals may also contact the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation at 701-328-8950, toll-free 1-800-755-2745, TTY 701-328-8968 to complete the survey by phone or to request a paper copy of the survey through the mail.

Paper surveys are also available at all eight Vocational Rehabilitation regional offices in North Dakota. Location information is online at www.nd.gov/dhs/dvr/about/regional-contact.html.

The North Dakota Division of Vocational Rehabilitation provides training and employment services that assist individuals with disabilities to be successfully employed. For more information on vocational rehabilitation services, go online to www.nd.gov/dhs/dvr/index.html.

Appendix Three: Survey Letters



Date

Name
Address1
City, State Zip Code

Dear [consumer name]:

Every three years the ND Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) conducts surveys of people who are being served by DVR.

All responses are confidential and anonymous. Please take a few minutes to complete this survey and return by **November 11, 2011**. You may complete the survey in one of four ways:

1. Complete the enclosed survey and return it in the envelope provided
2. Complete the survey online at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/DKXGBWH>
3. Call DVR at 701-328-8950 or 1-800-755-2745 to complete the survey by phone
4. Call DVR at 701-328-8950 or 1-800-755-2745 to ask for alternative formats (i.e., larger print)

Your response is very valuable. It will help us to identify unmet needs and barriers relating to employment so that we can develop possible solutions.

If you have any questions or concerns about completing the survey, please contact Keith LoMurray, Research Analyst, at (701) 328-8705 or at klomurray@nd.gov.

Thank you for your time and effort in assisting us in this important project.

Sincerely,

Russell Cusack
Director

Mike Remboldt, Chair
State Rehabilitation Council





**DIVISION of
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION**
State of North Dakota

State Office
1237 W. Divide, Suite 1B
Bismarck, ND 58501-1208
Phone: 1-701-328-8950
Toll Free: 1-800-755-2745
Fax: 1-701-328-8969
www.nd.gov/dhs/dvr

October 10, 2011

Name
Company
Address1
City, State Zip

Dear [PROVIDER PERSON]:

The ND Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) are seeking your help in our efforts to improve employment services for people with disabilities. As part of this effort, every three years a survey of unmet needs and barriers to employment is conducted. As someone interested in persons with disabilities and employment, you provide an important perspective.

All responses are confidential and anonymous. Please complete the survey by **November 11, 2011**. This can be done either by completing the enclosed survey and returning it in the self-addressed envelope provided or by completing the survey online at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/S95VXQ5>.

It is also important to have a broad response from people throughout North Dakota. If you know of people who are encountering barriers to employment or have unmet needs and would be willing to share their experiences, please send them the following survey link <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/DKXGBWH> or have them call (800) 755-2745 to receive a paper copy.

Your response is very valuable. The SRC will make program and policy recommendations to DVR based on the results of the survey, which will affect the services provided in the future.

If you have any questions or concerns about completing the survey, please contact Keith LoMurray, Research Analyst, at (701) 328-8705 or at klomurray@nd.gov.

Thank you for your time and effort in assisting us in this important project.

Sincerely,

Russell Cusack
Director

Mike Remboldt, Chair
State Rehabilitation Council





**DIVISION of
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION**
State of North Dakota

State Office
1237 W. Divide, Suite 1B
Bismarck, ND 58501-1208
Phone: 1-701-328-8950
Toll Free: 1-800-755-2745
Fax: 1-701-328-8969
www.nd.gov/dhs/dvr

October 10, 2011

Name
Address1
City, State Zip

Dear [ADVOCATE NAME]:

The ND Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) are seeking your help in our efforts to improve employment services for people with disabilities. As part of this effort, every three years a survey of unmet needs and barriers to employment is conducted. As someone interested in persons with disabilities and employment, you provide an important perspective.

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Sincerely,

Russell Cusack
Director

Mike Remboldt, Chair
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Appendix Four: Surveys

Consumer Survey of Current Services and Unmet Needs

1. **What is your county of residence?** _____
2. **What is your age?** _____
3. **Are you** ☐ Male ☐ Female
4. **Are you of Hispanic origin?** (such as Mexican, Spanish Latino, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, Central or South American)
☐ Yes
☐ No
5. **Please mark below options that best describe your race.** (check all that apply)
☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
☐ Asian
☐ Black or African American
☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
☐ White
☐ Other _____
6. **Please indicate the highest level of education you have completed.**
☐ Below 9th Grade
☐ 9th to 12th Grade, No Diploma
☐ High School Diploma, GED or Equivalent
☐ Some College or Associate Degree
☐ Bachelor's Degree
☐ Graduate-Level Coursework/Degree
☐ Other _____

7. **Have you immigrated to the United States within the past 5 years?**
☐ Yes
☐ No
8. **Who is providing your employment-related services?**
(check all that apply)
☐ Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) (A list of CRPs is provided at the end of this survey.)
☐ TANF / Job Services / Community Options
☐ Vocational Rehabilitation
☐ Other _____
9. **To what extent are the employment services that you need, or have needed, been met by agency/service providers?**
☐ Never
☐ Rarely
☐ Occasionally
☐ Frequently
☐ Always

10. **Which options below best describe your disability?**

(check all that apply)

- ☐ Learning Disability
- ☐ Developmental Disability
- ☐ Mental Illness / Emotional Disturbance (includes depression, anxiety, etc.)
- ☐ Sensory Impairments (vision, hearing, etc.)
- ☐ Autism Spectrum Disorder (autism, Asperger's)
- ☐ Orthopedic Impairment (joint replacement, back or joint injury, paralysis, etc.)
- ☐ Traumatic Brain Injury
- ☐ Degenerative Conditions (multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's, degenerative disc disease, carpal tunnel, etc.)
- ☐ Abuse of Drugs or Alcohol
- ☐ Other _____

11. For each of the employment needs listed below, please mark what best describes your situation.

Need is being met	Not being met	Does not apply	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Assistance with Finding and/or Keeping a Job
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Vocational Guidance and Career Options
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	On-Going Training, Support on the Job
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Increased Opportunities for Self-Employment
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	One-On-One Job Training (Job Coaching)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Follow-Up After Job Placement
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Benefits Planning
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Workplace Relationship Training
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Youth to Adult Transition Employment Services
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Transportation
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Assistive Technology (such as alternative keyboards, specialized chairs, devices, etc.)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Interpreter Services
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Physical And Mental Restoration Services (such as prosthetics, therapy, mental health counseling, drug/alcohol treatment, Etc.)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Housing
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Independent Living Skills
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Other _____
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	All My Employment Needs Are Being Met

12. Please provide any suggestions you may have to best meet the unmet employment needs of individuals with disabilities.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation of the ND Department of Human Services is interested in any additional comments, questions, or suggestions. By adding comments below, you are given the same opportunity everyone else has to add valuable information that can help improve vocational rehabilitation services that you or other people receive in the future. Please take some additional time to let us know what you think.

All comments will be included in a report to state and regional staff as well as the members of the State Rehabilitation Council. There will be no way to identify you unless you share revealing information in your comments. In some cases, individuals will choose to include contact information so that feedback can be provided to their concerns on an individual basis.

List of CRPs (for reference in answering question #8)

4th Corporation	Enable, Inc.	Tri-City Cares, Inc.
ABLE, Inc.	HAV-IT Services	Open Door Center
Agassiz Enterprises	Evaluation & Training Center	Opportunity, Inc.
Alpha Opportunities, Inc.	Fraser, Ltd.	Pride, Inc.
Community Living Services, Inc.	Friendship, Inc.	Progress Enterprises, Inc.
Development Homes, Inc.	H.I.T., Inc.	Rehab Services, Inc.
Dakota Center for Independent Living	Knife River Group Homes, Inc.	REM North Dakota, Inc.
Minot Vocational Adjustment Workshop	Lake Region Corporation	Success Unlimited
Red River Human Services Foundation	Listen, Inc.	SUPPORT SYSTEMS, INC.
Community Options for Residential and Employment Services, Inc.		

Provider Survey of Current Employment Services and Unmet Employment Needs for Individuals with Disabilities

1. **What is the type of organization that you work for?**

☐ Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP)

☐ Other _____

2. **How would you describe your current position with the organization for which you work?**

☐ Director

☐ Other _____

☐ Supervisor

3. **In what Region/Counties do you provide employment-related services?**

COUNTIES IN EACH REGION

<input type="radio"/> I, WILLISTON	Divide, Williams, McKenzie
<input type="radio"/> II, MINOT	Burke, Renville, Mountrail, Ward, McHenry, Bottineau, Pierce
<input type="radio"/> III, DEVILS LAKE	Rolette, Towner, Cavalier, Ramsey, Benson, Eddy
<input type="radio"/> IV, GRAND FORKS	Pembina, Walsh, Nelson, Grand Forks
<input type="radio"/> V, FARGO	Steele, Traill, Cass, Ransom, Richland, Sargent
<input type="radio"/> VI, JAMESTOWN	Griggs, Wells, Foster, Stutsman, Barnes, Logan, LaMoure, McIntosh, Dickey
<input type="radio"/> VII, BISMARCK	Mercer, McLean, Sheridan, Oliver, Burleigh, Kidder, Morton, Emmons, Grant, Sioux
<input type="radio"/> VIII, DICKINSON	Slope, Golden Valley, Billings, Dunn, Stark, Hettinger, Bowman, Adams

4. **How many years has your organization been providing employment-related services?**

5. **On average, how many consumers receive employment-related services from your agency per month? _____**

6. **To what extent are the employment services needed by individuals with disabilities being met by your agency?**

☐ Never

☐ Rarely

☐ Occasionally

☐ Frequently

☐ Always

7. **How many direct service staff do you have working either full or part-time?**

Length Of Employment	# Full Time	# Part-Time
Less Than Six Months		
Six Months To One Year		
One Year To Two Years		
Two Years To Five Years		
Five Or More Years		

8. **Please check all of the employment services your agency currently provides and any additional services you could be providing to better meet the needs of your customers.**

	Currently Provide	Additional Services We Could Be Providing To Better Meet The Needs Of Our Customers
Supported Employment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Situational Assessments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Job Readiness Training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Job Development Training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Job Placement And Follow-Up	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Job Coaching	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Workplace Relationship Training (Soft Skills)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Independent Living Skills Training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. **From your experience with individuals with significant disabilities, please select the top three barriers that impede your ability to provide services.**

- ☐ Agency Staff Turnover
- ☐ Community Perception Of People With Disabilities
- ☐ Funding For Agency Operations And Services
- ☐ Funding For Extended Services
- ☐ Funding For Staff
- ☐ Geographical Location Of, or Distance To, Consumers
- ☐ Insufficient Community Services
- ☐ Staff Knowledge Of Disability And Functional Limitations
- ☐ Staff Training
- ☐ VR Staff Turnover
- ☐ Other _____

10. **Please consider the employment needs listed below and mark the top three that are not being met.**

- ☐ Assistance with Finding and/or Keeping a Job (Supported Employment)
- ☐ Vocational Guidance and Career Options
- ☐ On-Going Training, Support on The Job
- ☐ Increased Opportunities for Self-Employment
- ☐ One-on-One Job Training (Job Coaching)
- ☐ Follow-Up After Job Placement
- ☐ Benefits Planning
- ☐ Workplace Relationship Training
- ☐ Youth to Adult Transition Employment Services
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ Assistive Technology (such as alternative keyboards, specialized chairs, devices, etc.)
- ☐ Interpreter Services
- ☐ Physical and Mental Restoration Services (such as prosthetics, therapy, mental health counseling, drug/alcohol treatment, etc.)
- ☐ Housing
- ☐ Independent Living Skills
- ☐ Other _____

11. **What are your top three training needs?**

- ☐ Job Coaching Strategies
- ☐ Marketing
- ☐ Job Readiness Training/Soft Skills
- ☐ Writing Progress Notes
- ☐ VR Process
- ☐ Working With Employers
- ☐ Reasonable Accommodation
- ☐ Disclosure
- ☐ Disabilities
- ☐ Functional Limitations As They Relate To Work
- ☐ Job Development
- ☐ Supported Employment
- ☐ Other _____

12. **What resources do you use for training beyond your internal trainers?**
(check all that apply)

- ☐ Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE)
- ☐ Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)
- ☐ North Dakota Association of Community Providers (NDACP)
- ☐ Minot State University
- ☐ Other _____

13. **What would be the best way for your staff to access training?**
(check all that apply)

- ☐ In Person
- ☐ Webinars
- ☐ Video Conference
- ☐ Skype
- ☐ Written Materials
- ☐ Other _____

Please provide any suggestions you may have to best meet the unmet employment needs of individuals with disabilities.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation of the ND Department of Human Services is interested in any additional comments, questions, or suggestions. By adding comments below, you are given the same opportunity everyone else has to add valuable information that can help improve vocational rehabilitation services that you or other people receive in the future. Please take some additional time to let us know what you think.

Comments will be included in a report to state and regional staff as well as the members of the State Rehabilitation Council. There will be no way to identify you unless you share revealing information in your comments. In some cases, individuals will choose to include contact information so that feedback can be provided to their concerns on an individual basis.

Advocate Survey of Current Employment Services and Unmet Employment Needs for Individuals with Disabilities

1. Please identify the nature of your advocacy focus?

(Check all that apply)

- ☐ Individual advocate, not associated with any formal group or organization
- ☐ Board/Council member for organization that advocates for individuals with disabilities
- ☐ Board/Council member for a provider of services to individuals with disabilities
- ☐ Family member of individual with disabilities
- ☐ Friend of individual with disabilities
- ☐ Other _____

2. In what Region/Counties do your advocacy efforts focus?

COUNTIES IN EACH REGION		
<input type="radio"/>	I, WILLISTON	Divide, Williams, McKenzie
<input type="radio"/>	II, MINOT	Burke, Renville, Mountrail, Ward, McHenry, Bottineau, Pierce
<input type="radio"/>	III, DEVILS LAKE	Rolette, Towner, Cavalier, Ramsey, Benson, Eddy
<input type="radio"/>	IV, GRAND FORKS	Pembina, Walsh, Nelson, Grand Forks
<input type="radio"/>	V, FARGO	Steele, Traill, Cass, Ransom, Richland, Sargent
<input type="radio"/>	VI, JAMESTOWN	Wells, Foster, Stutsman, Barnes, Logan, LaMoure, McIntosh, Dickey, Griggs
<input type="radio"/>	VII, BISMARCK	Mercer, McLean, Sheridan, Oliver, Burleigh, Kidder, Morton, Emmons, Grant, Sioux
<input type="radio"/>	VIII, DICKINSON	Golden Valley, Billings, Dunn, Stark, Hettinger, Bowman, Adams, Slope

3. To what extent are the employment services needed by individuals with disabilities being met by agency/service providers?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Frequently
- ☐ Always

4. Please mark below all options that best describe the disabilities around which your advocacy efforts are focused? (check all that apply)

- ☐ Learning Disability
- ☐ Developmental Disability
- ☐ Mental Illness / Emotional Disturbance (includes depression, anxiety, etc.)
- ☐ Sensory Impairments (vision, hearing, etc.)
- ☐ Autism Spectrum Disorder (autism, Asperger's)
- ☐ Orthopedic Impairment (joint replacement, back or joint injury, paralysis, etc.)
- ☐ Traumatic Brain Injury
- ☐ Degenerative Conditions (multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's, degenerative disc disease, carpal tunnel, etc.)
- ☐ Abuse Of Drugs Or Alcohol
- ☐ Other _____

5. From your knowledge of individuals' disabilities and providers' abilities to offer services, please select what you believe are the top three barriers that hinder providers' ability to deliver services.

- ☐ Agency Staff Turnover
- ☐ Community Perception of People with Disabilities
- ☐ Funding for Agency Operations and Services
- ☐ Funding for Extended Services
- ☐ Funding for Staff
- ☐ Geographical Location of, or Distance to, Consumers
- ☐ Insufficient Community Services
- ☐ Staff Knowledge of Disability and Functional Limitations
- ☐ Staff Training
- ☐ VR Staff Turnover
- ☐ Other _____

6. Please consider the employment needs of people for whom you advocate listed below and mark the top three that are not being met.

- ☐ Assistance With Finding and/or Keeping a Job
- ☐ Vocational Guidance And Career Options
- ☐ On-Going Training, Support on the Job
- ☐ Increased Opportunities for Self-Employment
- ☐ One-on-One Job Training (Job Coaching)
- ☐ Follow-Up After Job Placement
- ☐ Benefits Planning
- ☐ Workplace Relationship Training
- ☐ Youth to Adult Transition Employment Services
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ Assistive Technology (such as alternative keyboards, specialized chairs, devices, etc.)
- ☐ Interpreter Services
- ☐ Physical and Mental Restoration Services (such as prosthetics, therapy, mental health counseling, drug/alcohol treatment, etc.)
- ☐ Housing
- ☐ Independent Living Skills
- ☐ Other _____

7. Please provide any suggestions you may have to best meet the unmet employment needs of individuals with disabilities.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation of the ND Department of Human Services is interested in any additional comments, questions, or suggestions. By adding comments below, you are given the same opportunity everyone else has to add valuable information that can help improve vocational rehabilitation services that you or other people receive in the future. Please take some additional time to let us know what you think.

All comments will be included in a report to state and regional staff as well as the members of the State Rehabilitation Council. There will be no way to identify you unless you share revealing information in your comments. In some cases, individuals will choose to include contact information so that feedback can be provided to their concerns on an individual basis.

Thank you for your assistance by completing this survey.

Have a wonderful day!



Appendix 5: Reminder Postcards

Advocate Postcard

Your Voice Counts

You recently received a survey from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation with the Department of Human Services.

If you have yet to respond, please do so by completing the mailed survey or online at

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/W6HRQL7>

Thank You!



Consumer Postcard

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Thank You!



Provider Postcard

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Thank You!



DVR is a division of



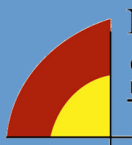
Carol K. Olson,
Executive Director
North Dakota Department of Human Services

Russell Cusack, Director
ND Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
1237 West Divide Avenue, Ste 1B
Bismarck, ND 58501
Phone: 701-328-8950
Toll Free: 800-755-2745
Fax: 701-328-8969
TTY: 701-328-8968

www.nd.gov/dhs/dvr

The 2012 Vocational Rehabilitation Triennial Needs Assessment

was created in partnership with the



North Dakota

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

A NEW HORIZON FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES